

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9255

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, HA

SUBJECT: HOLIDAY RUMORS OF CABINET AND DIPLOMATIC CHANGES IN GOH

1. HAITIAN POLITICAL RUMORS TEND TO FOCUS ON MAJOR HOLIDAYS AND POLITICAL ANNIVERSARIES, AND THIS YEAR'S CARNIVAL (FEB 9-11) IS NO EXCEPTION. RUMORS HAVE BEEN SPURRED, AS THEY WERE LAST YEAR AT THE SAME PERIOD, BY THE EXTENDED PRESENCE IN HAITI OF PRESIDENT DUVALIER'S STRONG-WILLED AND POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS SISTER MARIE-DENISE DOMINIQUE. ALL THREE SISTERS APPEARED FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. SIMONE, WHO USUALLY LIVES WITH MARIE-DENISE, RECENTLY TRAVELED TO THE US WITH FAMILY FINANCIAL MANAGER HENRI SICLAIT, BUT MARIE-DENISE HAS NOT YET REJOINED HER HUSBAND IN HIS EXILE IN GREAT FALLS, VA. AND PARIS.

2. ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCES, DUVALIER SOON WILL ANNOUNCE A CABINET AND DIPLOMATIC RESHUFFLE IN WHICH AMBASSADOR FRANCISQUE IN PARIS WOULD SWITCH JOBS WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY BRUTUS. (THE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT BUT CONTROVERSIAL FRANCISQUE WAS OUSTED AS FINANCE MINISTER IN THE GENERAL AUGUST 1973 CABINET SHAKE-UP, ALLEGEDLY FOR HIS POOR ADMINISTRATION AND MISHANDLING OF PRIVATE INVESTORS, BUT HE RETAINS HIS CLOSE TIES WITH THE PRESIDENT'S MOTHER AND HAS WATCHED CLOSELY OVER MARIE-DENISE'S WELFARE WHENEVER SHE IS IN FRANCE.) THE FRENCH ALSO TIP FRITZ JEAN-BAPTISTE, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL TOURISM AND FORMER GOH AMBASSADOR TO BONN AND THE HAGUE, AS CONFIDENTIAL

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A MAN IN THE ASCENDANCY.

3. THE MOST INTERESTING RUMOR IS THAT MARIE-DENISE WILL DIVORCE MAX DOMINIQUE -- STILL NOT ACCEPTABLE HERE BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE IN A JUNE 1967 PLOT AGAINST DR. DUVALIER -- IN RETURN FOR BEING RESTORED TO THE PALACE'S INNER-SANCTUM AND TO THE LEVERS OF POWER. SPECIFICALLY SHE WOULD IN THIS VERSION SERVE AS HER BROTHER'S PRIVATE SECRETARY (MUCH AS SHE ONCE DID FOR HER LATE FATHER), DISPLACING AUGUSTE DOUYON IN THAT POSITION. ARGUING AGAINST THIS SPECULATION ARE REPORTS THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN BROTHER AND SISTER HAVE COOLED, AND THAT SHE HAS BEEN KEPT APART FROM DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON THIS VISIT.

4. COMMENT: WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY A LIMITED CABINET RESHUFFLE SOON, SINCE MANY MINISTERS NAMED IN AUGUST 1973 AND MARCH 1974 HAVE NOW BEEN OPERATING LONG ENOUGH FOR PRESIDENT DUVALIER TO JUDGE THEIR PERFORMANCES IN LIGHT OF HIS ENHANCED EXPECTATIONS ABOUT HAITI'S PROSPECTS, AND MORE SEASONED JUDGEMENT ABOUT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA THE RECENT WITHDRAWAL OF THE WELL-CONNECTED BUT INEPT AMBASSADOR BOUCHETTE FROM WASHINGTON AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY GEORGES SALOMON, A HIGHLY QUALIFIED, ARTICULATE DIPLOMAT, OFFERS SOME HOPE THAT ANY HIGHER LEVEL CHANGES WILL BE DICTATED LESS BY DEGREE OF FAMILY LOYALTY THAN BY DEMONSTRATED COMPETENCE AND SUITABILITY.

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